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U.S.—losing clandestine war to KGB, two experts assert

By Bill Gertz
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The United States is losing the clandestine war that the Soviet intelligence agency, the KGB, is waging against it, according to two intelligence authorities.

In a speech before the conservative Monday Club, John Barron, the author of two authoritative books on KGB activities, said the recent spate of espionage cases in the United States is the result of a major Soviet "clandestine attack."

Mr. Barron cited the arrests of an FBI agent in California, a former Navy officer, a CIA clerk and a defense industry employee as recent espionage cases directed by the KGB and its surrogates.

He attributed the increase in espionage activities to the Soviet Union's "insoluble" internal problems, particularly its inability to keep pace with the technologically superior West.

The Soviet Union cannot overtly confront the West, Mr. Barron asserted, and must resort instead to clandestine means to achieve its goals of weakening the U.S. strategic posture.

"The greater threat derives from the clandestine efforts of the Soviet Union to affect the way we think, to cloud our understanding of reality, to determine, if you will, what we as a nation do — how Congress conducts its business, how it is able to assist those in the rest of world who do not want to live under the tyranny of either the left or the right ... how it will assist the people of Afghanistan.

"This is the area where the KGB will increasingly concentrate its activities," Mr. Barron said.

He said the United States is losing the clandestine war because such methods are "alien" to Americans.

"We are even unwilling to invest in the maintenance of a reasonably healthy foreign counterintelligence agency," Mr. Barron said. "We are unprepared psychologically in terms of what we know, and in terms of a resolve to defend ourselves against a type of warfare that is wholly alien to our society and culture."

He said intelligence warfare is carried out by "hundreds of professional officers in our midst" with diplomatic immunity. The KGB

will continue to intensify its covert program, he said.

Francis J. McNamara, an intelligence and national security expert with the public policy organization, the Nathan Hale Institute, told the gathering that U.S. counterintelligence efforts to curb KGB activities are "inadequate in both quantity and quality."

Mr. McNamara, former staff director of the House Committee on Internal Security, said the FBI's counterintelligence division reached its peak between 1972 and 1973. In 1980, the number of special agents for all aspects of law enforcement was cut from 8,630 to 7,804, he said.

That cut came despite requests by then FBI Director Clarence Kelly, from 1973 to 1977, for 250 additional FBI counterintelligence agents, Mr. McNamara said.

At the time Mr. Kelly said the FBI was no longer capable of matching Soviet bloc spies on a one-for-one basis, the minimum required for effective counterintelligence. However, his request for additional agents was rejected, and an almost 10 percent cut followed.

"It wasn't until 1982 — the first time in many years — that Congress finally appropriated some additional funds so the FBI could hire more agents," Mr. McNamara said. Today the bureau has 8,818 law enforcement agents, including an unspecified number of counterintelligence agents.

Counterintelligence by the FBI has been hampered by dramatic increases in Soviet bloc personnel stationed in the United States, Mr. McNamara said. He noted that in 1972 there were 1,154 Soviet bloc nationals in the United States, 40 percent of whom were estimated to be spies. Today, there are twice as many Soviet spies in the United States, he said.

Last month President Reagan said the number of Soviet personnel is around 2,500 and that 30 to 40 percent are considered spies. The president called for reducing the levels to "more manageable levels." Both Mr. McNamara and Mr. Barron called for greater government efforts to educate the American public to the problem of Soviet espionage.

Mr. Barron said the United States should follow Britain's policy of not allowing the Soviet Union to replace diplomatic and consular personnel kicked out for spying.